

12 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

Not only must every sentence be perfectly clear, but sentence and paragraph alike must run easily. There was to be no sense of effort anywhere visible—all, however laborious, was to seem unstudied and natural.

July 28.—My account of the Highlands is getting into tolerable shape. To-morrow I shall begin to transcribe again, and to polish. What trouble these few pages will have cost me ! The great object is that, after all this trouble, they may read as if they had been spoken off, and may seem to flow as easily as table talk.¹

Mere improvement of the style, however, was only one part of his care. The arrangement of his matter and the order of his topics were still more important. He did not hesitate to take a paragraph or a chapter to pieces and to rearrange it, in order to make the story develop itself more naturally and flow more easily.

After breakfast, I fell to work on the conspiracy of the Jacobites in 1690. This is a tough chapter. To make the narrative flow along as it ought, every part naturally springing from that which precedes ; to carry the reader backward and forward across St. George's Channel without distracting his attention is not easy. Yet it may be done. I believe that this art of transition is as important, or nearly so, to history, as the art of narration.²

Feb. 6,—I worked hard at altering the arrangement of the first three chapters of the third volume.

What labour
it is to make a tolerable book, and how little
readers know
how much trouble the ordering of the parts
has cost the
writer !³

The result was the success which so much
painstaking
labour deserved, and an immediate and
general success

¹ Journal, 1850. Ibid. p. 278.

⁸ Journal, Apr. 15, 1850. Ibid. p. 276.

³ Journal, 1854. Ibid. p. 377.